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Founded by the Late AL-HAJ KHWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN

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RABĪ'UT-THĀNĪ, 1353 A.H.
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CONTENTS.

Eid-ul-Azha (1352 A.H.) Congregation	Frontispiece.
	PAGE
Eid-ul-Azha Sermon : by H. E. Shaikh Hafiz Wahba	221
Islam calls the Faithful in England	227
Inquiry into the Unknown	234
The Islamic Purdah : by Moulvi Abul Hasanat ..	237
Correspondence	246
Twenty Years Ago	248
Whither Islam : by Sirdar Ikbāl Ali Shah ..	249
The Holy Qur-an and Its Commentary : by the late Khawaja Kamal-ud-Din	254
What is Islam ?	259

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Partial view of Eid-ul-Azha (1352 A H.) congregation at the mosque, Woking.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
نُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِ الْكَرِيمِ

THE ISLAMIC REVIEW

VOL. XXII.

RABĪ'UT-THĀNĪ, 1353 A.H.

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EID-UL-AZHA (1352) SERMON

BY HIS EXCELLENCY SHAIKH HAFIZ WAHBA

PART I.

Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest.

All praise is due to Allah. We praise Him and seek His guidance and protection. We betake us for refuge to Allah against the evils of our minds and against the bad things of our actions. And whomsoever Allah guides to the right path, there is no one to lead him astray and whomsoever He causes to err (as a result of his actions), there is no one to lead him aright.

And I bear witness that nothing deserves to be worshipped but Allah, and that Muhammad is His servant and apostle, whom He has sent with truth, as the bearer of good tidings and as a warner.

He who obeys Allah and His Apostle, follows the right way, and he who disobeys them does not harm any

ISLAMIC REVIEW

but his own self, and does not do any harm to Allah, the Exalted.

Now, surely the best word is the Book of Allah and the best way is the way of Muhammad, and the worst of actions is the act of innovation (in religion), and every innovation is misguidance.

MY MUSLIM BROTHERS,

To-day is the festival of Eid-ul-Azha, and to-day it is that our Muslim brothers from all over the world are gathered together in the Holy places of Mecca to perform the most solemn duty of pilgrimage, to make acquaintance one with another, to seek counsel of one another and to discuss matters concerning their social welfare.

And proclaim among men the pilgrimage: so they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every remote path.

That they may witness advantages for them, and mention the name of Allah during stated days over what He has given them of the cattle quadrupeds, then eat of them and feed the distressed one, the needy. §

We also are assembled here to-day to fulfil and realise the self-same supreme purposes.

This festival, to-day, recalls to our minds the historical event in which the great patriarch Abraham and his son Ishmael exemplified purity of love for God. You will remember that Abraham dreamed that he was sacrificing his son. He asked his son Ishmael what he thought of his vision. Abraham, who was all purity, all submission to the Divine Will, was ready to fulfil his dream literally. The son, to use the words of the Qur-án, said: "O my father, do what you are commanded; if Allah please, you will find me of the patient ones." When Abraham was ready to lay his sharp knife to the throat of his son, God called out to him saying "O Abraham, you have, indeed, shown the truth of the vision," and ransomed him with a great sacrifice.

§ Holy Qur-án, XXII; 27.

EID-UL-AZHA (1352) SERMON

It was thus that the Divine commandment to sacrifice an animal in the place of his son marked the abolition of the savage custom of human sacrifice, not only among the Chaldeans but among many other nations also.

This incident typifies in itself the purity of love on the part of both Abraham and Ishmael. It is a reminder to sons to obey their parents—which thing is considered the keystone in the foundation of family life.

It should be further borne in mind that the purpose of sacrificing an animal on this day is not merely the killing of a beast. The real underlying object is to revive and perpetuate the memory of Abraham ; to remind us to be good and kind to the poor, to be careful for them and to comfort them, more especially on this particular day in which happiness suffuses every Muslim house. It is in this way that Islam reminds you of the poor and enjoins you to be compassionate towards them. The Qur-án says :

There does not reach Allah their flesh nor their blood, but to Him is acceptable the guarding (against evil) on your part. *

In the tradition of the Prophet we read : “ The poor are the family of Allah, and the most loved by God is he who is kindest to the poor.”

The world to-day is struggling, on the one hand, to ensure that democracy and equality of rights among men shall reign supreme, and on the other, towards the destruction of the sovereignty of parties, nations and races.

It will interest you to know that one of the most important features of Islam, a feature of which it is proud, is that some thirteen centuries ago, it actually established democracy, liberty and equality of rights for all sections of people, thus bringing about the mightiest revolution the world has ever known.

We assemble for prayers in Mosques, and gather together at this time of pilgrimage to learn that no man

* Holy Qur-án, XXII; 37.

ISLAMIC REVIEW

takes precedence over another, and to remember that in Islam there is no distinction of profession, caste or rank ; to remember that, Ladies and Gentlemen, the one most honourable among us is, in the eyes of God, he who is most careful of his duties towards God. The Qur-án says :—

So when the trumpet is blown, there shall be no ties of relationship between them on that day, nor shall they ask concerning each other.¹

Thirteen centuries ago Islam abolished the invidious distinctions of colour and race prejudice, established the principle of complete equality of rights, and granted no privilege to anyone. All Muslims are brothers. This fact will become plainer to those who read the history of Islam.

Islam is the religion of peace and tranquillity and neither the religion of war and aggression, nor that of idleness and indolence. Remember, a Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands all people are safe ; a Muslim is he who never injures either neighbour or friend ; a Muslim is he who, when he speaks, speaks the truth ; a Muslim is he who, when he makes a promise, keeps it, and a Muslim is he who, when he is trusted, never betrays.

The Qur-án says :—

And the servants of the Beneficent God are they who walk on the earth in humbleness, and when the ignorant address them, they say, Peace.

And they who pass the night prostrating themselves before their Lord and standing.

And they who say, O our Lord, turn away from us the chastisement of hell, surely the chastisement thereof is a lasting evil :

Surely it is an evil abode and (evil) place to stay.

And they who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor parsimonious and (keep) between these the just mean.²

Islam is the religion which affirms the Unity of the one God in the most emphatic terms. It aims at uniting the whole of the Muslim World in the path of good, by

1. 23 : 101.

2. 25 : 63—67.

EID-UL-AZHA (1352) SERMON

co-operation in its aims and purposes. It aims at preventing evil from thwarting the prosperity of mankind and the good of the brotherhood of man.

Let not the glamour of modern civilisation to-day beguile you, and let not its tinsel make you oblivious of the glory of your faith. It is your duty that you study Qur-án Sherif and the history of Islam from its real sources. You will find that the more you study it, the more you will love your religion and the more you will adhere to it.

The Qur-án says :—

Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputations with them in the best manner ; surely your Lord best knows who go astray from His path, and He knows best those who follow the right way. And if you take your turn, then reply with the like of that with which you were afflicted, but if you are patient, it will certainly be best for those who are patient.

And be patient and your patience is not but by the assistance of Allah, and grieve not for them and do not distress yourself at that which they plan.

Surely Allah is with those who guard (against evil), and those who do good (to others).¹

May Allah bless me and you through the Great Qur-án and make us and you benefit by what is in it of the signs and reminders of wisdom. I say this and seek protection from the Great Allah for myself and for you and for all Muslims. So seek His protection ; surely He is Forgiving, Merciful.

PART II.

Allah is the Greatest—(7 times).

Allah is the Greatest in greatness. And praise be to Allah in abundance. And Glory be to Allah, morning and evening. There is nothing worthy to be worshipped but Allah. And we do not worship anything but Him, being sincere to Him in obedience (Religion), although the unbelievers may resent (it).

1. 16 : 125—128.

ISLAMIC REVIEW

MY MUSLIM BROTHERS,

“ You are the best of nations raised up for (the benefit of) men ; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong.”

Remember that lovers of God and those most favoured by Him are they who follow what God has commanded them to do in the way of spreading justice, love for work and its execution in the best manner, the performance of their duties towards family, motherland and friends, and the giving of advice to all who need it.

The most honourable in the eyes of God are those who do good to others, tend the sick, the crippled and the infirm and give a helping hand to those in distress.

They are the Ansar (helpers) of Allah who labour continually for the spreading of virtue, and fight unceasingly by all possible means against every form of evil. Every action is followed by its natural results, for this is the way of God, and you shall never find it change.

The Qur-án says :—

“It is not your desires nor the desires of the people of the book (Jews and Christians) that make any difference. Whosoever does wrong will have its recompense.” Servants of God.

“ Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and aggression.”

Remember God and He will exalt you ; and give thanks to Him for His favour and He will increase it. Remembrance of God is the best thing. He knows what you do.

I do not wish to leave my place without acknowledging with thanks that honour which the Muslim Society of Great Britain has conferred upon me—that Society to which belongs the honour of organizing functions of this nature on the occasions therefor ordained.

While we acknowledge this, our debt of gratitude to the Society and to those who represent it in this country,

ISLAM CALLS THE FAITHFUL IN ENGLAND

I am anxious that we shall not forget the responsibility which devolves upon us of helping the Society in every way to the utmost of our power so that it may carry on its noble work. In conclusion, I thank you all for having the patience to hear me speak in English, in which language, I regret to say, I am not, as yet, very proficient.

Please forgive me my mistakes, because to forgive, to let down gently, and to listen in patience to, what may sometimes be displeasing to him, are some of the characteristics of a Muslim.

ISLAM CALLS THE FAITHFUL IN ENGLAND¹

BY IAN COSTER

At the setting of the sun three men prostrated themselves towards Mecca, placing their foreheads on the ground. Surmounting the dome above their heads a gilded crescent cut the sky of a London suburb.

Two of the men were Indians; one was a Scots lad, a university student, come down from the north with the intention of becoming a missionary.

This was a lone outpost, in the West, of a faith which threatened to drive the Cross from Europe. Its followers in this continent now number only five millions, but in Asia and Africa between 200 and 300 millions support the might of Islam.

“Allahu Akbar. God is Great. There is no god but God and Muhammad is His servant and His Messenger.”

The cry of the *muadhdhin* calls the faithful to prayer, five times a day in the oasis of the Sahara and by the mountains of Kashmir, in the cities of Egypt, Persia and Turkey.

¹ This article is one of a series “What shall man believe,” published in the *Sunday Dispatch*, London—Ed., I. R.

ISLAMIC REVIEW

The same call, strange as the crying of a gull herd miles inland, goes up from the steps of the mosque at Woking.

It has stood there since 1890, when it was built with money collected from Bhopal. But it was not until 1913 that it became the centre of a Muslim mission, under the leadership of an Indian, who gave up a flourishing practice at the Bar of his own country "to plant a foreign tree in an uncongenial soil."

So, thirteen centuries after the death of Muhammad, the religion which once cleft the world like a scimitar, has a small foothold in England.

Muhammad began as a small Arab trader, but he shook the world and changed the destiny of mankind.

He was born in Mecca, which was a sacred city long before his time. It retained memories of Abraham and Ishmael, from whom the Arab traces his ancestry. For four months of every year feuds had to be forgotten and swords sheathed.

In A. D. 576 Muhammad was left an orphan of six years old. His family was noble, but his uncle, to whom he was entrusted, was poor. The youth became a trader, commissioned by a wealthy widow named Khadijah to drive her camels over the ancient trading routes.

The youth and his employer fell in love¹ and were married, though she was 15 years his senior.

They were happy ; sons and daughters were born to them. Muhammad, because of his honesty, became known as "the Trustworthy," and he prospered.

The story might have ended there. But it did not. When he was 35 Muhammad was chosen, by lot, to set the sacred Black Stone back in its place in the shrine which still exists, the Kaaba.

¹From the strict Muslim point of view it was the lady who fell in love with the Prophet and the Prophet could not find any ground for refusal when she offered her hand for marriage. From the Prophet's standpoint it was a marriage of convenience.—Ed., *I. R.*

ISLAM CALLS THE FAITHFUL IN ENGLAND

Before that incident he had spent much of his time in meditating. Now he retired to a cave in the desert and communed with God. In a vision he received the command to go forth and bring his countrymen back to the ways of righteousness.

His family first proclaimed him Prophet. Khadijah, his adopted son and ex-Christian slave, Zeid, and his nephew (*sic*), Ali, soon believed in his mission. Other adherents gathered round him.

But his followers were only a tiny band. Suddenly he made his first pronouncement. "There is one God!" and immediately the city, given over to the worship of many idols, plotted to kill him and wipe out his followers. The Koreish, a powerful tribe, was furiously angry.

Tormented and persecuted he still went on making converts. In the year 622, when he was 52, he slipped out of Mecca, evaded the Koreish, and went to Medina, 120 miles away.

Medina paid more heed to his teachings. He became the virtual ruler of the city, though there was an undercurrent of hatred. Plots culminated in warfare. The Koreish, one thousand strong, marched from Mecca against him.

With three hundred of the faithful, Muhammad went out against them and overthrew them utterly. The battle of Badr was the first of the victories of Muslim arms.

Though he was badly wounded in the second battle, Muhammad lost no faith in his mission. Six years later he had not only taken Mecca, destroying the 360 idols of the Kaaba and forcing¹ the Koreish to acknowledge him

¹He never forced anyone to embrace his faith even after the conquest of Mecca. He left it to the choice of Meccans either to follow their ancestral religion or to become members of the new fraternity. We are tempted to quote Sir William Muir in this connection. He says—"Although the city had cheerfully accepted his authority, all its inhabitants had not yet embraced the new religion, nor formally acknowledged his prophetic claims; perhaps he intended to follow the course he had pursued at Medina, and leave the conversion of the people to be gradually accomplished without compulsion."—*Ed., I. R.*

ISLAMIC REVIEW

the Prophet of God, but had made himself master of the whole peninsula.

He had united Arabia. In 632 he died calmly in the arms of Ayesha, the best loved of his wives, having said, "I have fulfilled my mission."

In the century after his death the arms of Islam conquered the whole region between the Himalayas and the Pyrenees ; Irak was subdued and then Persia. Syria fell, wrested from Heraclius by Khaled "the Sword of God." Jerusalem gave in after a siege of four months.

Egypt....North Africa....Spain and then into Gaul. But Islam came no further. Exactly one hundred years after the death of Muhammad, the Arab cavalry was broken on the immovable wall of the Franks under Charles Martel, the grandfather of Charlemagne.

I called upon the Imam of the Woking Mosque with the record of one of the greatest military feats in the world fresh in my mind. The Imam is Abdul Majid, M.A., who comes from North India and is slim and black-bearded. I expected him to glory in the victories of the Muslim.

"Islam was not spread by the sword," he said. "The word itself means 'peace.' Muhammad never fought one battle which was not in self-defence. The Koreish went to Medina to slaughter him. *That* was the first battle.

"Certainly the Muslims have never adopted the impracticable Christian doctrine of turning the other cheek. When they have been attacked or threatened they have fought back, but, except in isolated instances, they have never fought for lust of gain or conquest.

"Our religion has its strongest hold now in peace-loving countries. There is no priesthood in Islam, and this Woking mosque is one of the few attempts at missioning which have ever been made. Islam has been spread by personal contact and example.

ISLAM CALLS THE FAITHFUL IN ENGLAND

“Submission to the will of the One God, of Allah, was the fundamental principle of the Muslim’s faith. By good acts, by caring for the poor and helping the needy, by prayer and fasting, man entered into the promised reward of Paradise.

“Muhammad was the last, the ‘seal of all the Prophets,’” the Imam said, “and his book, the Qur-án, is the revelation of God, exactly as it fell from Muhammad’s lips nearly 1,400 years ago.

“But Muhammad never claimed to be teaching anything new. He taught only what Moses, Abraham and Jesus had taught before him. His teachings do not conflict with those of Buddha.

“Jesus is mentioned 25 times in the Qur-án. We reject the doctrines of Divinity, Atonement, Resurrection and Sonship, but we accept him as a prophet, as a mouth-piece of God, of the same status as Muhammad.

“We believe that Jesus was crucified, but that He did not die on the Cross. He was taken down alive and, afterwards, appeared to His disciples, showing his wounds and eating and drinking with them, because His life had been saved.”

The Imam said that he believed in the Divine origin of every sacred book, including the Old and New Testaments, but he also believed that all of them, with the exception of the Koran, had become corrupted through human interpolation.

Life after death, he said, was not a new life, but a continuation of this one. There was no such thing as eternal damnation; all mankind would, sooner or later, reach Paradise, but the misdoers of this life would first have to be purified in hell.

“Hell is your mother”—your friend. This was written in the Koran to show that hell was not a place of revenge or punishment, but for purification.

ISLAMIC REVIEW

Those who qualified by the righteousness of their lives on earth, would immediately enter Paradise. Islam did not claim the exclusive right to entry there, but it offered the shortest route.

Muslims were always accused of having a Paradise of sensual delight. This arose because the imagery of the Qur-án was taken literally. "Houri" did not mean a woman; it meant "beautiful one," and it might refer to an inanimate object.

The only sure thing known about Paradise was that in it there would be nothing but the remembrance of God.

God was known by 99 names, and the predominant four of these were Beneficent, Merciful, Lord of the Worlds and Master of the Day of Judgment.

Polygamy is allowed by Islam. Each man can take four wives under certain conditions. Surely that is better, said the Imam, than the illicit plurality of wives of Christian countries.

Actually, one man in one thousand takes more than one wife. None of the Imam's relatives for generations has done so.

Concubines are not allowed. The punishment for adultery is the giving of 80 stripes in public to the offenders.

The position of women in Islam is often mis-stated. They are accepted as the equals of men spiritually, mentally, and materially. Marriage is a contract in which both parties have equal rights.

Fourteen centuries ago a married woman's property was acknowledged by Islam to be her own, though she had not been given that right in England until 1875, and she does not have it in France even yet.

The literal meaning of the word "harem" is sacred, and this shows the high regard Islam has for womanhood. "Paradise lies at the feet of thy mother," says the Qur-án.

ISLAM CALLS THE FAITHFUL IN ENGLAND

At five times of the day, beginning with dawn and ending with evening, the Muslim has to pray, in the prescribed manner. But there is no other ceremonial. There is no "Sabbath" or day of rest. On Friday an afternoon prayer is said by a community together.

Alcohol is forbidden. The flesh of the pig is not eaten. Sheep and goats have to be slain by the cutting of the jugular vein before they are edible. In the month of Ramadhan the Muslim must keep an absolute fast from dawn until sunset.

It is his duty to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his life-time. There, clothed in two unsewn pieces of cloth, the Negro from Northern Africa, the Bengali, the Egyptian, the European, worship together at the ancient shrine of the Kaaba.

Various actions have to be gone through. The faithful run between two points, to commemorate the running of Hagar to get water for her thirsting son Ishmael. At the end each sacrifices a goat. This they do to commemorate how God prevented the sacrifice of Abraham's son.

The Jews say this son was Isaac, but the Muslims believe it was Ishmael who was willing to be offered up to God, until a ram was found caught in the thicket.

The existence of angels, who are agencies exerting a good influence on man, is part of the Muslim faith. Two guardian angels, one recording the evil deeds and the other the good, watch over every action of a man's life.

All castes, all races, all colours are equal in Islam, said the Imam finally. The lowliest Negro from an African village has the same status as Lord Headley, one of the most prominent of English converts.

"Assalamo alaykum" ("Peace be upon you!") is the greeting of every Muslim to his brother.

INQUIRY INTO THE UNKNOWN¹

MUSLIMS AND SPIRITUALISM

THE similarities between Islam and Spiritualism were referred to by Mr. Abdul Majid, of Woking Mosque, who gave an address at the Golders Green Spiritualist Church on Sunday evening. The distinguished visitor gave a most illuminating and interesting talk, which was followed by a demonstration of clairvoyance by Mrs. A. W. Challis, of Edgware.

In introducing the speaker, Mr. Challis (President of the Golders Green Spiritualists) said that Spiritualism was based on the truth and fact that spirits existed independently of the body. Revelation was permitted to mankind through the mind. Spiritualism taught that religion and man's relation with God were personal matters.

At the opening of his address, Mr. Majid declared that the basic principles of Islam and Spiritualism were the same. A Muslim found nothing strange in Spiritualism, and took it for granted. Differences arose only after these fundamentals had been realised.

"How many of us take thought for the life after death?" asked Mr. Majid. "If there is such a thing as life after death, how many prepare for that life?"

It was here that Spiritualism and Islam should try to join hands. A Muslim only differed from a Spiritualist in that he prepared more for the hereafter and was not so much bothered with fundamentals. Having realised that life after death did exist, he troubled only with preparing for it.

¹Reproduced from the *Hendon, Cricklewood, Golders Green, Mill Hill, Edgware, Hampstead and Burnt Oak Gazette*, Friday, May 11th, 1934.

INQUIRY INTO THE UNKNOWN

According to Islam, the speaker explained, life was divided into three phases, the physical, the moral and the spiritual. A Muslim had always before him one object, spiritual illumination in this life. That was his goal. He always tried to avoid things that were detrimental to spiritual illumination.

The difficulty with Spiritualism was that there had been no Spiritualist prophet of the standing of Jesus Christ, who could say what was helpful and what was detrimental, so that everybody had their own views.

Mr. Majid said that he did not attach undue importance to ritualism, but so long as it did not get the upper hand, it was an essential part of spiritual health. All law-givers had told their followers to do certain things and not to do other things. Ritualism, if properly understood, helped.

In the Koran, instructions were laid down which controlled a Muslim's daily life. There was no such thing as absolute liberty. A child had to be controlled, and that in the same way, rules and regulations had been laid down by the Creator for mankind.

Muslims did not eat certain foods, because certain things had been proved by spiritual doctors to be detrimental. The ego would always remain independent, even if one were at one with God.

It was easy to say what happened in the life after death, the difficulty was to know how to prepare for it. A system was wanted; ritualism was essential for self-discipline.

"For this reason," said Mr. Majid, "I say my prayers five times a day, because the spiritual self needs nourishment just as the physical self."

The question was, how to pray. Mere meditation was not enough for spiritual progress. He had seen

ISLAMIC REVIEW

people "meditate" in a chair for a quarter-of-an-hour. It would be impossible for a person to feel the greatness of God and remain sitting.

"I can't understand how you remain sitting," said Mr. Majid. "If you realise the greatness of God, you must adopt the lowliest of postures to show the humility and the nothingness of this life. Muslims do not put their faces to the floor merely out of custom. If I say that God is great, I must be prostrate. Harmony between the body and the mind is essential."

The difficulty was, how to make the body feel. It did not like to subject itself to the spiritual self; that was why it was essential to adopt a mode of life. Some people should fast. Jesus Christ fasted for forty days in order to control his physical self and obtain spiritual illumination.

Some people prayed and fasted regularly, and yet made no spiritual progress. For them patience and perseverance were required, and then God would grant His own special favours.

The speaker said that he attached great importance to clairaudience, clairvoyance and mediumship, but only in that they proved the existence of a life after death. That, however, was not the be-all and the end-all, and having realised that, Spiritualists should go further.

Mr. Challis, in thanking Mr. Majid, said that Islam struck him as a very practical religion, it was a great mistake to stop at phenomena.

Questions were invited, and one gentleman asked Mr. Majid what was the spiritual effect of fasting. Mr. Majid explained that it helped the control of the physical self, and said that the less one ate the more one became spiritually illumined.

The same gentleman remarked that he had once fasted for five days, but that was as a cure for indigestion!

THE ISLAMIC PURDAH

Asked to explain the Muslim view of Christianity, Mr Majid said that Islam considered Jesus Christ to be as much a prophet of God as Muhammad, but did not believe in the creed of Christianity. He had always said that a Muslim was nothing but a true Christian.

In connection with a question regarding spiritual healing, Mr. Majid said he did not think that healing and Spiritualism had any connection. Although holy people could heal, there were many healers who were not holy. He considered the giving of alms to be more praiseworthy than the giving of health for it implied more sacrifice.

A hymn, "We come at morn and dewy eve," brought the first part of the service to a close.

THE ISLAMIC PURDAH OR SECLUSION OF WOMEN

BY MAULVI ABUL HASANAT

The Purdah, which is certainly not an Arabic word, has gathered so much of ill odour in the Modern World that it stinks even to the most irresponsible nose. It has generally been recognised as the chief institution of Islam, construed as the very negation of liberty of the other sex, and considered responsible for more miseries than an average man knows of. Even the Hindus in India, who had the horrible Caste System to keep down sections of the same sex long before the Purdah was heard of, would regret that they had ever to come in contact with these *Purdahwallas* to the great undoing of their womenfolk. The Europeans will tremble and shiver and develop other symptoms of morbid delirium at the very word and foreclose the door of further discussions by interjecting "Horrible," "Atrocious," "Inhuman," and a dozen of similar epithets in the same breath.

ISLAMIC REVIEW

True, Islam has not encouraged the so-called liberty on the part of women with regard to physical movements to the same degree as it prevails in the West at present. But it is all the same doubtful whether this progressive (or aggressive ?) freedom in the Western countries for the feminine section has been due to any liberal provisions in the Christian religion. Neither is it known if ever the good and sympathetic menfolk of Europe, who have persistently denied the legitimate political aspirations of their subject nations on grounds of immaturity, met in a grand assembly and out of sheer goodness conferred this freedom on the other sex. History records no such Magna Charta at least. But all the same, daughters of Eve have now achieved what perhaps she herself could not ; they now step around the modern Eden at will, with no restriction about any Forbidden Tree.

A student of History never fails to be struck by what Islam has done for the women. The status of women in Islam has been ably set forth by eminent writers, and its recapitulation would be of no use to those who *will* not see. In a brilliant verse, the Qur-án says, "Your fathers and mothers,—you really don't know who are greater for you," thus hinting at an absolute equality of the sexes in so far as respectability goes. Islam gave the daughter a share in her father's property, and if it fell short of what the son got, a set-off was provided in what she would get from the husband also. It prescribed education, nay, it made education compulsory for both the sexes, an institution hardly known to the other communities till very recent times. We read of mother Ayesha having taken part in discussions both literary and theological. We are told of women in Islam having occupied eminent positions as scholars at a time when even the men in the other spheres knew little of education.

As regards physical movements, Islam never denied

THE ISLAMIC PURDAH

to women freedom in this respect. It never held that they should be absolutely segregated, should have no free air or be closely shut in their homes. It is a pity, we in India happen to be tied down in rigid systems—systems that have grown up gradually, God knows how, from influences with which Islam has nothing to do. Conventions grow up and die quite apart from recognised institutions of a nation and it is surely a matter for study what circumstances had forced these utterly unfounded ones in our social life. How far had our forefathers been duped to emulate the Hindu idea of, “Asurjam-pashya” (a lady untouched by sun-beams), is also a matter for careful study. The history of Islam, however, records the events of Muslim ladies having taken part in congregational prayers in common mosques, on occasions like that of 'Id, having taken part in battles and wars, and having accompanied their people to Haj, not to speak of their going out on daily business. No more illuminating instance could be forthcoming in support of the above contentions than that our mother Ayesha had herself led her party in one of the well-known battles, known as Jange Jamal! All these would go to show that Muslim ladies could never have sat tight indoors with thick veils on.

Detractors would, of course, point out the conventional Purdah in India with all its evils, and cry Islam down. But women in Islam in other Islamic countries have never been in the same abject strait. That women here are not educated is no fault of Islam. On the contrary, Islam has a grievance against Indian Muslims for their having violated the emphatic injunction of imparting education to women. But apart from female education, is not illiteracy of the people in general the main problem of India? And as distinguished from any positive disinclination towards education, has not India

ISLAMIC REVIEW

poverty and a score of other causes to put forward? If so, ascribing female illiteracy to Purdah alone would be hardly justified.

While we claim Islam has given the other sex enough of freedom, we do not mean that it encouraged freedom to the extent it is prevalent in the Western countries. Islam has recognised evil passions in man, nay it has stressed that they are there. There is a constant struggle going on between passions, evil and good, and the greater the danger of the former triumphing over the latter, the graver has been the warning set forth. Thus while women have been permitted to join common prayers, they have been warned against promiscuously mixing with the opposite sex. And there is more danger to a young woman walking aside in the Eden gardens with "her young man" than in her walking all round Calcutta in the open streets on her own private jobs!

Our minds are responsive to temptations and it will perhaps be admitted that slackness in morals is in direct ratio to the free mixing of the two sexes. The easiest way to save oneself from a vice is to keep aloof from circumstances that bring it about. Without prejudice to either sex, we might quote a saying, "There are never a man and a woman together without the Satan being the third." Without taking it too literally, we might credit this saying with practically nothing but truth. Accordingly, Islam has enjoined carefulness on both. "Ask the believers to cast down their eyes and guard their passions; surely Allah is aware of what they do. Ask the believing women to cast down their looks and guard their passions"—so says the Qur-án. These injunctions do assume a condition of society in which women move about freely. They, however, emphatically discourage Ball-room dancing, Parisian nudities and other ways of promiscuous intermingling of the sexes.

THE ISLAMIC PURDAH

It is a pity that we males do not live up to Religion. And this has supplied the anti-Purdah propagandists with the argument that because man is free and does with impunity commit vices, there is no ground for the women to be deprived of their freedom. I am afraid, this is also Islam's grievance. The real solution, however, would be to make *men less free* or rather to *restrict* their movements. Otherwise, it is as well to argue that because the majority indulge in vices why shouldn't the minority also do so, or that if those who have powers misuse them, why shouldn't the others be given the same powers to take the same liberties in retaliation ? I say Religion has lost much of its ground in the modern world, and if *men* could ever be trusted implicitly the same surely cannot be done at the present times.

We must bear in mind that "Freedom" is a relative term. If we stretch it too far, apparently we shall land nowhere. Human passion for freedom has been as insatiable as it has been for riches or for pleasures. Great minds that have been thinking too much about it have invented many forms of sexual relations—but none has yet satisfied them fully, for "Satisfaction" is another relative term. They have tried Civil, Contractual, At-will and other forms of marriages and have yet to abolish marriages altogether. To complete the analogy of or to emulate the freedom enjoyed by other members of the Animal Kingdom, we apparently need free enjoyment. The funny part of it is, however, that they have raised their voices against "restrictions" imposed by Religion for the common welfare, while themselves calmly recognising that the main point about Human Law is that it *restricts individual freedom to ensure public freedom*. Far less to speak of inter-sexual equality and freedom of the fair sex, has man achieved the much talked of freedom within the sphere of his own sex ? If man still looks upon his brother any

ISLAMIC REVIEW

way other than as equal, if people still boast of their own caste and look upon others as untouchables, if they still refuse to recognise any other colour than their own and look upon others as inferiors on that score, would it not be sheer stupidity to profess to ensure equality for the sexes and freedom for *women*?

Great philosophers, if you offer to shut yourselves in and let the females come out, we shall hasten to congratulate you, for it will be most fair and equitable. Let them have a bit of fresh air, for you yourselves have had enough. This will be both self-control and magnanimity! Or as an alternative, why don't you insist on the other necessary corollary to your proposition also, *viz.*, that both man and woman should earn their livings independently and only for sexual pleasures unite like animals? The female beast or bird does not eat out of stores brought in by the male. Sexual pleasure is the heart's desire of both the parties; why then should the woman live, and often extravagantly, at the cost of the man?

Without prejudice to the fairer sex, we should say women in the West have not only got their freedom but got it with vengeance. Division of labour as between the sexes is a thing of the past. The man will sweat out in quest of money and then leave the strings of the purse to the woman. In the common sphere of household management the woman will veto the man as easily as a king of old did his advisers. The male cook will fan the oven, the gardener dress up the compound, the *Ayah* will bring up the children and except for a little amount of "neckshooting" in these affairs, the woman will be pre-occupied in arranging visits to the Cinemas or the Parties. Of course, God would be cursed (or rather Nature) for allotting the labours of pregnancy to the woman, but she will soon acquire the *right* (?) of refusing to have children! Well, only the other day, we read in the papers accounts

THE ISLAMIC PURDAH

of an Association of henpecked husbands who solemnly agreed not to partake of food unless cooked by the wives, not to disclose on demand where they had been, and otherwise not to be so easily vetoed in household affairs of their own!

I do not blame the women so much. They have been duped in more ways than one, and they are only beginning to take revenge in other spheres. They have been sacrificed atrociously. The real honour to woman does not consist of a few items of so-called liberty with regard to physical movements. The honest jealousy for the sanctity of womanhood—for which warriors fell and nations fought—is unfortunately regarded in these days and that almost humorously, as the “cave-man spirit.” Chastity, the most precious jewel on their crown, the greatest of virtues men knew of,—doesn’t evoke so much of interest now as an idle talk! Man’s cunning devices for exploiting the sexual weakness in woman have been concealed behind certain superficial customs and practices hypocritically extolled.

“Why should we be so suspicious about our women-folk?” they ask. Well, I shall say we do not suspect them at all. I suspect ourselves and the Satan between us. I say men have so far held the upperhand—so far, meaning, practically since Adam and Eve got down on Earth or since Gorillas “evolved” into forefathers of Darwin. It has been their hobby to play with the other sex, in dreams when not in actual practice. They have made the other sex parade in Novels, Theatres and Cinemas and else, and not in one in a thousand would they like to glorify married love. Love to be interesting must be romantic! One will revel in the most shameless love-story as long as A’s daughter and *not one’s own* can be pictured flirting with B and *not her husband*. Such having been the atmosphere, it was only necessary to

ISLAMIC REVIEW

call these fairies out to complete the Romances ! It was cruelty going by the name of magnanimity ! They deceived them saying they wanted their freedom and equality, but actually wished to see their heroes and heroines working in practice ! And if any sense of reciprocity were required to blunt the fainting moral sense and regularise proceedings, we could as well steal from one another to satisfy our periodical needs !

We often hear it said that the standard of chastity in the West is not necessarily so low as is misconceived by us, Easterners. Well, with Islam forbidding even as much as an amorous glance towards a woman, I am afraid, our estimate would unquestionably be true. By no dose of liberalising ourselves could we compromise ourselves to viewing the holding of a woman by a man abreast under exciting notes of music and the intertwining of legs and arms, as anything like an honourable social entertainment. Well, but who cares ? The parties are quite happy, and what does it matter if an outsider cannot bear it ? Well, if it but stopped there ! We are, however, no exponents of the " Thus far and no further " theory. As if to say as soon as you have free movements of the sexes, human frailty becomes a thing of the past and an unprecedented sense of responsibility dawns upon you ! Yes, and so much of responsibility as it would be no wonder to profess to believe that a man should marry the lower half of a woman and another the upper, and each would act in his own jurisdiction without encroaching upon that of the other ! I say, in a world practically divorced from Religion, where the greatest sin is looked upon with no more awe than the lowest of a so-called crime, where adultery is no more a danger to Public Morals than parking a car on the wrong side to public safety, the invitation to the other sex to come out for fresh air would be as hollow as that of Mr. Jackal to Miss Hen to come out for a walk in the

THE ISLAMIC PURDAH

open air ! Chastity ? You hold it so dear ? We shall guarantee we shall not rob you of it by force, but if you feel like shaking it off at any later stage, we *shall* not stand in your way. How benevolent an offer ! You suspect us ? Because you see us going round and round, five times a day, all over the foot of your inner compound to steal a glance at your heavenly face ? Don't be silly, dear. As soon as I have got you face to face I shall never worry you for more than talks, unless, of course, you yourself be good enough to offer an innocent kiss ! Only distance maddens me, and the nearer I get you, the more sober do I turn out !

It's with such complimentary addresses that the other sex was duped out and the rest was left to passive indulgence. Thus we see—no Christ let the modern Eves loose, no Parliament voted their ransom ! They fell a prey to the most treacherous outrage on Womanhood ! Nature will not forget to take its revenge and sober judges have been regretting already. Management of the wife has been a difficult task, it has baffled conquerors, puzzled philosophers, and that of one so deceitfully indulged will perhaps prove doubly so. One may, as much as he likes, visualize political progress and material headway of humanity, but the raging volcano in the outraged Womanhood will wipe out everything. The West is positively heading towards the doom which overtook the Pagan nations of old. Like the Anarchist with a bomb and the Terrorist with the revolver, Miss America and Miss Europe will surely be walking about defying all control, with a headful of conceit, a mindful of venom and a holsterful of contraceptives and other medicinal weapons !

Islam can never be a party to this destructive libertinism. It has its own ideals. We shall ever pride in our score on female emancipation. It has given to women utmost privileges consistent with their ability to

ISLAMIC REVIEW

enjoy. It has guaranteed the very thing women hold so dear and if you live up to Religion, your wife will never want anything. You will be good to her, you will concentrate your love on her, she will help you in her own way and you will both share pleasures and anxieties. Islam does not prohibit free air nor family games. You will pride in the sanctity of your own Womanhood. Elevate them by all means, mentally and *morally*, and never forget the latter. But if we go beyond this and blindly imitate people who have gone wrong, we shall surely be sorry ! And God forbid.

CORRESPONDENCE

JOHANNESBURG, TRANSVAAL,
SOUTH AFRICA.

THE EDITOR OF THE ISLAMIC REVIEW,
WOKING, ENGLAND.

SIR,

In search of a true religion, I have been for a considerable time carefully studying various literatures on Christianity, Hinduism and Islam, on the latter especially those by the late Al-Haj Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, of the Woking Mission, England, and I have come to the conclusion that among the religions of the world, Islam alone is pure, lofty and rational and soars highest in the realm of the spirit as in matters mundane and satisfies human cravings and search for the Absolute.

I find that Islam is the only bridge that connects human beings to the Creator and establishes direct communion between men and God. Moreover, Islam is free from priesthood, dogmatism, intolerance, idolatory, animism, atonement, trans-substantiation, re-incarnation, karma and superstitions.

The truth of Islam ; its beautiful rational conception of Allah and the Universe ; its broad-based spirit of all-pervading brotherhood and equality, has conquered my soul and given peace to my enquiring mind : La-i-laha-il-Alah-Muhammad-ur-Rasul Allah,

CORRESPONDENCE

I must, however, record my gratitude to my spiritual guide, Mr. A. A. Mirza Ghalib Beg, a bosom friend of the late Al-Haj Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, and a confidant of the late Moulana Muhammad Ali of Jerusalem fame, the younger one of the Ali brothers, for the assistance he has given me in the elucidation of several points which at first did not appear quite clear to me and to perpetuate my expression of gratitude I shall ever identify my name with his.

Your brother-in-Islam
YOUSUF BEG,
formerly DOUGLAS ROBERT.
LONDON, S.W.

DEAR SIR,

Thank you ever so much for the copy of the Qur-án, which I received this morning.

I have already begun the Introduction and afterwards shall proceed to read the whole book very carefully. I know I am going to enjoy every page of it; for it is such a work as this that I love. At a very early age I began to collect choice works—mainly fiction and so forth, and in consequence I have quite a modest library at my home—most of which I have read. But in recent years, I have turned aside to philosophy only. Indeed, apart from reading a few stories from Herodotus, it is a long time since I have read fiction at all—and may be, never shall again. I purchased a copy of “Magnolia Street” as soon it was published but have not so much as glanced through it.

I only tell you this to emphasise how much I appreciate your goodness in affording me this pleasure of reading something truly worth while. It is my hope that after I have read the Qur-án we may be able to exchange views on an equal footing that will be mutually agreed and accepted in the general interest of Islam and the spreading of Islam. In the meanwhile, I would be very happy to continue discoursing with you on matters which at present puzzle me and which I have difficulty in understanding. I regret I shall be unable to attend prayer at the Essex Hall this Friday, but will meet you as before, in the Hall of the Strand Palace Hotel at 4 o'clock on Friday if o. k. with you. If, therefore, I do not hear from you, I shall know you will be there at about 4 to receive me.

Well-Sir, I will close by saying *au revoir* till Friday at 4.

Yours very sincerely,
J. E. F.

TWENTY YEARS AGO

If we Muslims have any love for our Prophet, who amidst most severe trials exerted his best to spread the "Truth," let us show it in our deeds by spreading the truth and rendering a helping hand to those who have entered the field to proclaim the doctrine of unity. We are fast falling in the scale of nations. Is it because we have declined in our material wealth? No, it is otherwise. We lack spiritual wealth, our real heritage. That nation which is poor in spiritual treasure is truly poor. We lose this divine wealth only when we neglect our love for God, the foundation of goodness and knowledge, and consequently lose our love for purity of character and become the slaves of passion. The early Muslims who lived in the dreary desert of Arabia were poorer than ourselves from a material point of view, but they were far richer in treasure Divine. They possessed an unbounded love for God, and they were supremely blessed through this one necessary element; what was true before can again be true. Why waste time in pining for the fleeing treasure? Why not take time by its forelock and try to get spiritual riches? Material advancement, after all, is but a shadow of spiritual progress. This has been so in Islam.

W. MARKAR (CEYLON).

WHITHER ISLAM

BY SIRDAR IKBAL ALI SHAH

Addressing the faithful during his last pilgrimage at Mecca, the Prophet Muhammad proclaimed that all Muslims were to consider themselves as brothers. The implications and responsibilities thus enjoined were clearly realised. That advice of the Prophet became the watchword of the world of Islam. Fired with the magic of this slogan, his followers enriched the pages of their history with noble deeds in every walk of life till, I think, a period was placed upon it at the close of the last century.

The original conception of the brotherhood of Islam nurtured and made manifest by action, that every Muslim was to deal with the others in a fashion of selflessness, consider the others' interests as his own, desist from exalting himself over his fellows unduly. In commerce, industry, even in matters of state government, all who believed in the prophethood of Muhammad and the unity of God, were equal. But the gradual impact with the West began to alter many of those ideals.

Racial pride, class consciousness, political motives and priestly dictatorship, which allied itself with the rank autocracy of the crown ; raised their head in no mistakable form in that confederacy of Islam whose first law-giver had warned his followers against these very evils.

Whilst the Western impact to Islam might explain the coming in of these ugly facets, it can neither excuse the faithful for allowing such extraneous factors to trickle through into their actions ; nor, indeed, to a student of Muslim affairs, can it prove that the Western graft was due to any radical weakness in the preaching of this faith.

ISLAMIC REVIEW

Let us now observe the facts. Within living memory there was a time when Turkey was considered the standard-bearer of Islam. The Sultan in Constantinople, whether it was Abdul Hamid, or Rashid or Abdul Majid, rose in the cradle of a priestly thralldom which was stifling the free existence of Islam. Political motives prevailed upon them to raise battle cries like Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turanic movements. The Sultan-Khalifa's voice was to be considered as the voice of Islam ; and thereby the man upon whom was supposed to fall the mantle of the Prophet in our times, used it time and again in matters, which in the strict light of Islamic ideals cannot be justified.

Where such battle cries were successful, they were aided by the influence of the clergy. The priests helped the Leader of the Faithful, and he, in turn, lent strength as a part of the bargain to the power of their hierarchy ; till the right of interpretation of the religious laws was forbidden to the laymen of Islam.

A recent edict ran :—" If a verse of Scripture or the saying of the Prophet seems to stand in contradiction with the doctrines taught by the Doctors of the Law (Law of Islam, of course) . . . the doctrine of the Doctors of the Law is to be followed in preference of the Law." Now, no man can convince me that this Order means anything else than preference of the clergy's pronouncement over God's Qur-án. The priests, therefore, closed the door which Muhammad had opened, and ushered in a new element, that is the priestcraft, which is literally prohibited in Islam.

The natural reaction followed, and in place of constricting, shall I say, godlessness, as soon as the might of the crown was removed, the faithful drifted to avenues which Western impact had opened to them in the Near and the Middle East.

The immorality of the Muslims became brutality frank; robbery was not clad in armour, but in sleek garb of financial subtlety; national integrity became more pretentious, and equally conscienceless. If a Muslim was an official ruling a non-Muslim people, he purposely did injustice to his co-religionists so that in the eyes of his rivals, he may appear ultra-just and thus incidentally may be able to hold his official position the longer than his time. Real Islamic interests were sacrificed at the altar of clever political intrigue. The craze of leadership gripped the heart of those who called themselves Muslims, and who could be distinguished from non-Muslims only because some of them did not touch wine, or could eat the flesh of the cow. Some styled themselves as Moulanas, or religious leaders, hating England in one breath, and in the other declaring that if they died in London they much rather be buried in the land of the free Englishmen: styling, too, some of their truer co-religionists as infidels because of their non-Eastern marriages, and yet doing the same themselves.

Tired with these Moulana escapades, and false leadership, young Islam staggered about in the maze of Western influence, till it found men of great vision simultaneously in all the different spheres of Muslim life. Their sound moral leadership has again conquered the heart of the Muslim world, for all of them give a clarion call—"BACK TO THE BOOK"—back to the reality of Islam, to the simple life of the Prophet, to the days when the flame of Islam burnt fiercely, and was not fed by any exotic oil.

And the results of their preachings have been amazing. Whether in the desert of Mecca, the rich plains of North India, or the hills of Turan, Muslims are awakening to their heritage. Everyone is working out his salvation in the clear light of the Qur-án, the younger men, even though minus beards—which some Moulanas consider

sufficient mark of sanctity—a more devout race of Muslims has arisen to reclaim the lost glory of Islam.

In their endeavours, the original injunctions of the Prophet are taken as a guide. The spirit of Islamic prayer is realised to be not a begging-meeting five times a day, but calculated to bring the worshipper more in tune with the origin of his existence, fasting for the month of Ramadhán is now clearly understood as meaning self-discipline, and not mere starvation : also, by abstaining from food and drink from sunset to sundown gives the Faithful some impression of the distress of his less fortunate co-religionists ; pilgrimage to Mecca, another pillar of the faith of Islam, is no longer a mere journey only to provide a title of Haji, but therein the true aspect of internationalism is appreciated ; and the pilgrim sees that once in the Holy City of Islam, ALL MUSLIMS ARE BROTHERS, nothing to mark them from their fellows in rank or status of wealth ; all dressed alike in one simple white sheet bowing to Allah the One.

All this realisation, however, does not in any form connote hostility towards Christianity of the West. It only means that Young Islam having regained its sense of proportion, and having been thoroughly disgusted with the actions of the Moulanas, and political intriguers, and financial magnets, has reverted to its original form of simple life.

Contrary to the European belief, it is working for peace also, for the word "Islam" means peace in the Arabic language : and the saying of the Prophet has it that the best of us is he, from whose hands nobody suffers.

Nor are all these facts mere conjectures, for note what tragic fate had Afghanistan by following Europe, and trying to forget her true Islamic character by the sheer thralldom of ex-King Amanullah, and as soon as

WHITHER ISLAM

King Nadir Shah ushered in peace, and the confusions created by Amanullah were removed, normality returned to the Afghan hills to the extent that no Muslim can believe that any disturbance is ever likely to arise in Kabul as long as the popular and celebrated Nadir Shahi regime remains in tact.

In short, the young generation of the Muslim people are refusing the unhealthy Western graft, reverting to the plain-man's religious ideas of devoutness, with no fanaticism in their hearts, no desire for show or self-assertion, but to lead a peaceful life amongst themselves and with their neighbours, refusing, too, all those sharp practices which are associated in some countries as "good-business."

It must be obvious, it is indeed overwhelmingly so, that the Muslim spiritual resources are by no means unequal to the vast resurgence of materialism, which of late years have arisen in every country. It is evident that we are passing through one of those periods, when the depression of spirituality and the triumph of vice no longer distresses us, because, as I have said elsewhere, we are seeing the light of day, and seeking the true interpretation of Islam. The apogee of viciousness has passed; clearer vistas are ahead. We have already entered the avenues of a great religious renaissance; the modern awakening differs egregiously from all other similar epochs in the world's history; for we have discovered nothing new, we are only coming back to the real spiritual interpretation of Islam, and that we are doing ourselves—each for himself, not spoon-fed by the clergy—and we have not the slightest doubt that in our future actions we shall be found desirable citizens, good neighbours, because we are endeavouring to be good Muslims. We now know, the true meanings of our prayers, fasting and pilgrimage. We know, too, that to ape the West is unwholesome for

us; nevertheless we are not unfriendly to the West, only we would rather not have the *Can-Can*, the wine-bibber's dens, cabarets, gansters, or organise businesses of international magnitude which culminate in the hunting of its chief from shore to shore : no, we must be true to the old loyalties of Islam, possessing as little of money as is consistent with justice and spirituality.

THE HOLY QUR-ÂN AND ITS COMMENTARY

BY THE LATE KHWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN

(Continued from Vol. XXII, page 218)

Verse 77.—Such persons do not realise that God, in His invisibility, is aware of all these facts.

Verse 78.—Some of these people have no knowledge of the Book. They have certain predilections of their own, and on the basis of these they proceed to indulge in guess-work.

Verse 79.—It is, indeed, a thousand pities that men should, with their own hands, write a book, and ascribe it to God, and all this for the sake of monetary gain.

Verse 80.—These people are under the impression that Hell-fire will not touch them. Even to this day, according to Sale, the Jews hold to the belief that none of them will remain in Hell for more than a year. But if they were asked if there is any promise of God to them on this subject, it is obvious what the reply would be.

Verse 81.—There is only one way to Hell. When a man is inclined towards evil and treads the path of sin until he is surrounded with nothing but evil, he becomes, there and then, deserving of prolonged torture in Hell. The future will take care of itself, but as for the present he is already in a most palpable Hell-fire.

THE HOLY QUR-AN AND ITS COMMENTARY

Verse 82.—Of course, such of the Jews as accept and practise the good principles of life will have eternal comfort here as well as in the hereafter; and this comfort, in Qur-ánic terminology, is called the “Jannat” (Paradise is the English equivalent). In what way this comfort will manifest itself after death is a thing we cannot comprehend while in this world. This, however, can be said, that if our life continues after death, then one or the other of the two conditions discussed above must cling to us in our life to come. As for the life after death, modern researches have made it a comprehensible verity, and we are not required to plead its cause any longer. In verse 81, the term used in connection with sin is the Arabic word *Kasab*, which means “earn.” This word really defines the view of the Holy Qur-án on the nature of man. Clearly, the Book holds first that there is no sin in the nature of man and secondly, he acquires it from outside. As we all know, what we earn does not exist with us from the beginning, but has to come from without: thus sin is an effect of evil doing, that is to say, the evil grows in us only when we have committed a misdeed,—sin is, so to say, earned by us; otherwise our nature *per se* would be free from evil.

SECTION 10.

Verses 83 and 84.—In this section the Holy Qur-án makes mention of some of those commandments of God which were given to the Jews. These are the same commandments as are contained in the Bible, in the Books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. They are not all given here, first because they are mentioned in the Qur-án on other and different occasions and in a seemly and befitting way, and, secondly, because among those various commandments only such are mentioned here as are vitally necessary for any organised society. These verses were revealed at a time when the Jews were living in Medina.

ISLAMIC REVIEW

Verse 85.—Thus we find that in Verse 85 allusion has been made to events which took place in those days. One such event is that two tribes of Jews, Banu Nazir and Banu Quraiza, then living in Medina, entered into alliance, respectively, with other two non-Jewish tribes of Medina—*Aus* and *Khazraj*. It so happened that Aus and Khazraj fell out and had come to fighting. Consequently, the Jewish tribes siding with their respective allies had each to fight against their own people on the other side. But when some of them were taken prisoners, the Jews subscribed among themselves to a fund for the ransom of these prisoners on the ground that they were commanded so to do by their Law. Thus in the first place they fought against their own people for the simple reason that these latter were the allies of a hostile tribe, and then again when they became prisoners they collected subscriptions to purchase their freedom on the plea of a Divine Commandment. The inevitable conclusion would seem to be that these people obeyed parts of the Book and disobeyed other parts, according as it suited their desires. The consequence of such haphazard obedience to the Book, will surely be that they will be disgraced here in this world as well as in the hereafter.

Verse 86.—It is a pity that these people, engrossed in the trivial affairs of their present life, give up the great things of the future.

Verse 87.—In brief, many a prophet came after Moses for the guidance of the Jews. And last of all came the Prophet Jesus. But in their arrogance the Israelites called some of these prophets liars and some they killed. Here the tense used in the case of “*Qatal*” (kill) is not the past but the present, hinting, most probably, at the secret plots, which the Jews were hatching, at that time, against the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

THE HOLY QUR-AN AND ITS COMMENTARY

While speaking of the Prophet Jesus, the Holy Qur-án also makes mention of the *Holy Spirit*. For the Christians to suggest that the third person in the Christian Trinity is meant here, is an indication of their ignorance of the Qur-án. According to the Qur-án, the *Holy Spirit* is not the monopoly of Jesus; for, in verse 22, chapter *Al-Mujadilah*, the companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad are spoken of as being aided by this kind of *ruh* or spirit from God. The word *ruh* has a very comprehensive sense. Anything that causes movement in the subtler objects of creation is termed *ruh* in the Arabic language. Thus, the wind is *ruh*. But primarily *ruh* means that subtle power which infuses life into dead things and creates a stir in them. The word has also been used in the sense of the human soul, and indeed it has, as I have said, a very wide range of meaning. Nevertheless, everywhere it is used for the subtlest essence of things, even for that elementary substance in a thing inanimate on which its existence depends. But the meaning which is specially attached to the word is the human soul, in that particular condition when it is free from all taint of earthly desire and animal tendency. So long as such a condition of mind is not created in man, he cannot, according to the teachings of the Qur-án, enter into Paradise.¹ The preliminary stage of this condition is termed in the Holy Qur-án *Nafsi-mutmainnah*¹ (the soul at rest). But beyond this there are three more stages in the perfection of the human soul, which are called *the pleased*, *the pleasing* and *the serving* souls, respectively. At this last stage, man, freed at last from all animal desires, becomes, as it were, a lifeless thing in the hands of God. His wishes are identically those of God's. He is transformed consequently into a shadow of the Divine Will. It is to the soul in such a purified condition that the Qur-ánic word *Ruh-ul-Qudus* (the Holy Spirit) is

¹ & 2. See Preface, the chapter entitled : " Our Evolutionary Journey."

ISLAMIC REVIEW

applicable, and it is this thing which was granted to Jesus and nothing else or more than this, and this condition has its origin as I have pointed out, in *Nafsi-mutmainnah*.

We can see from the life of Jesus that he was in the fourth stage of spiritual evolution, that is, the stage of *pleased* (with God), *i.e.*, in a stage where a man is pleased with every dispensation with regard to his own self that comes from God, and accepts with a sense of pleasure whatever befalls him. Thus it will be seen that, while living in Jerusalem, and approaching his fateful end, he was all the while, exhibiting this particular condition of the soul. He prayed with all the earnestness he could command, to be saved from the calamity that was ahead. But the concluding words in that momentous prayer were these:—"O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy Will be done," (Matthew 26 : 42). The Holy Prophet Muhammad's description of his *Mi'raj* (Ascension) corroborates this view of ours, namely, that the Prophet Jesus was in the fourth stage of spiritual evolution when he left this world. According to a tradition, the Holy Prophet Muhammad saw different prophets in different heavens on the night of his Ascension. He saw the Son of Mary, however, in the fourth heaven. The Arabic word *Samā*, which is generally taken to be the equivalent of "Sky," originally means *height*. The spiritual elevation to which a particular prophet attained while leaving this earth, determined the sky or the heaven which he would enter after his translation, and this is where our Holy Prophet found him on the night of Ascension. Thus, whereas Jesus was in the fourth "sky," our Prophet passed through the seventh and came even to the Throne of God, which fact gives us an estimate of his spiritual evolution.

(To be continued.)

WHAT IS ISLAM ?

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[The following is a very brief account of Islam, and some of its teachings. For further details, please write to the IMAM of the Mosque, Woking, Surrey, England.]

ISLAM, THE RELIGION OF PEACE.—The word Islam literally means: (1) Peace; (2) the way to achieve peace; (3) submission; as submission to another's will is the safest course to establish peace. The word in its religious sense signifies complete submission to the Will of God.

OBJECT OF THE RELIGION.—Islam provides its followers with the perfect code whereby they may work out what is noble and good in man, and thus maintain peace between man and man.

THE PROPHET OF ISLAM.—Muhammad, popularly known as the Prophet of Islam, was however, the last Prophet of the Faith. Muslims, *i.e.*, the followers of Islam, accept all such of the world's Prophets, including Abraham, Moses and Jesus, as revealed the Will of God for the guidance of humanity.

THE QUR-AN.—The Gospel of the Muslim is the Qur-án. Muslims believe in the Divine origin of every other sacred book, inasmuch as all such previous revelations have become corrupted through human interpolation, the Qur-án, the last book of God, came as a recapitulation of the former Gospels.

ARTICLES OF FAITH IN ISLAM.—These are seven in number: belief in (1) Allah; (2) Angels; (3) Books from God; (4) Messengers from God; (5) the Hereafter; (6) the Premeasurement of good and evil; (7) Resurrection after death.

The life after death, according to Islamic teaching, is not a new life, but only a continuance of this life, bringing its hidden realities into light. It is a life of unlimited progress; those who qualify themselves in this life for the progress will enter into Paradise, which is another name for the said progressive life after death, and those who get their faculties stunted by their misdeeds in this life will be the denizens of the Hell—a life incapable of appreciating heavenly bliss, and of torment—in order to get themselves purged of all impurities and thus to become fit for the life in Heaven. State after death is an image of the spiritual state in this life.

The sixth article of faith has been confused by some with what is popularly known as Fatalism. A Muslim neither believes in Fatalism nor Predestination; he believes in Premeasurement. Everything created by God is for good in the given use and under the given circumstances. Its abuse is evil and suffering.

PILLARS OF ISLAM.—These are five in number: (1) Declaration of faith in the Oneness of God, and in the Divine Messengership of Muhammad; (2) Prayer; (3) Fasting; (4) Almsgiving; (5) Pilgrimage to the Holy Shrine at Mecca.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.—The Muslims worship One God—the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Just, the Cherisher of All the

ISLAMIC REVIEW

Worlds, the Friend, the Guide, the Helper. There is none like Him. He has no partner. He is neither begotten nor has He begotten any son or daughter. He is Indivisible in Person. He is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Glorious, the Magnificent, the Beautiful, the Eternal, the Infinite, the First and the Last.

FAITH AND ACTION.—Faith without action is a dead letter. Faith by itself is insufficient, unless translated into action. A Muslim believes in his own personal accountability for his actions in this life and in the hereafter. Each must bear his own burden, and none can expiate for another's sin.

ETHICS OF ISLAM.—"Imbue yourself with Divine Attributes," says the noble Prophet. God is the prototype of man, and His Attributes form the basis of Muslim ethics. Righteousness in Islam consists in leading a life in complete harmony with the Divine Attributes. To act otherwise is sin.

CAPABILITIES OF MAN IN ISLAM.—The Muslim believes in the inherent sinlessness of man's nature, which, made of the goodliest fibre, is capable of unlimited progress, setting him above the angels, and leading him to the border of Divinity.

THE POSITION OF WOMAN IN ISLAM.—Man and woman come from the same essence, possess the same soul, and they have been equipped with equal capability for intellectual, spiritual and moral attainments. Islam places man and woman under the like obligations, the one to the other.

EQUALITY OF MANKIND AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF ISLAM.—Islam is the religion of the Unity of God and the equality of mankind. Lineage, riches and family honours are accidental things; virtue and the service of humanity are the matters of real merit. Distinctions of colour, race and creed are unknown in the ranks of Islam. All mankind is of one family, and Islam has succeeded in welding the black and the white into one fraternal whole.

PERSONAL JUDGMENT.—Islam encourages the exercise of personal judgment and respects difference of opinion, which, according to the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, is a blessing of God.

KNOWLEDGE.—The pursuit of knowledge is a duty in Islam, and it is the acquisition of knowledge that makes men superior to angels.

SANCTITY OF LABOUR.—Every labour which enables man to live honestly is respected. Idleness is deemed a sin.

CHARITY.—All the faculties of man have been given to him as a trust from God, for the benefit of his fellow-creatures. It is man's duty to live for others, and his charities must be applied without any distinction of persons. Charity in Islam brings man nearer to God. Charity and the giving of alms have been made obligatory, and every person who possesses property above a certain limit has to pay a tax, levied on the rich for the benefit of the poor.